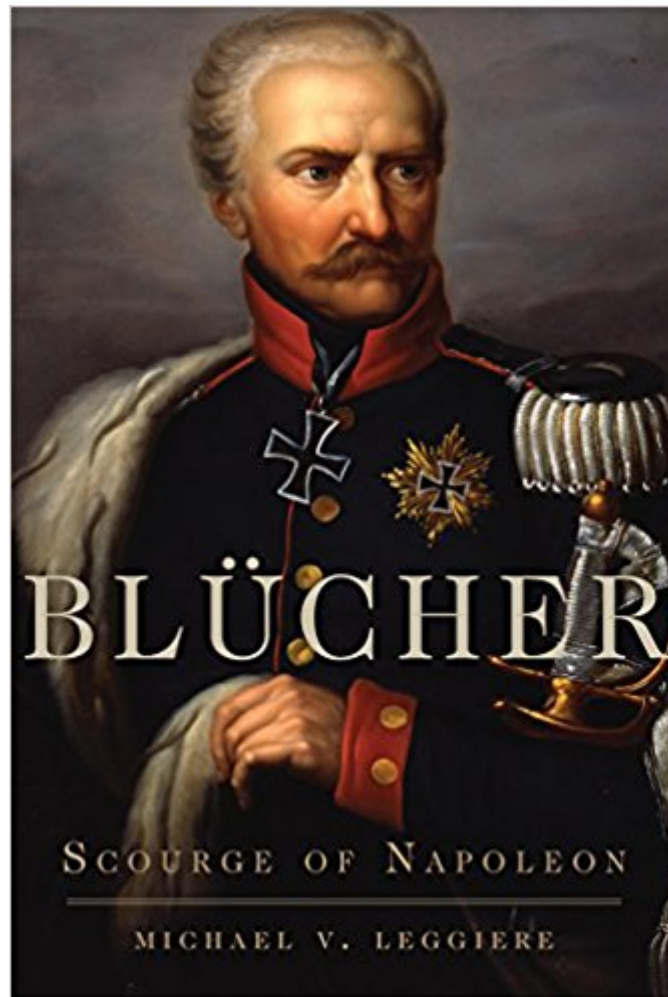


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Blücher: Scourge Of Napoleon (Campaigns And Commanders Series)



Synopsis

One of the most colorful characters in the Napoleonic pantheon, Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher (1742–1819) is best known as the Prussian general who, along with the Duke of Wellington, defeated Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo. Throughout his long career, Blücher distinguished himself as a bold commander, but his actions at times appeared erratic and reckless. This magnificent biography by Michael V. Leggiere, an award-winning historian of the Napoleonic Wars, is the first scholarly book in English to explore Blücher's life and military career—and his impact on Napoleon. Drawing on exhaustive research in European archives, Leggiere eschews the melodrama of earlier biographies and offers instead a richly nuanced portrait of a talented leader who, contrary to popular perception, had a strong grasp of military strategy. Nicknamed "the Marshal Forward" by his soldiers, he in fact retreated more often than he attacked. Focusing on the campaigns of 1813, 1814, and 1815, Leggiere evaluates the full effects of Blücher's operations on his archenemy. In addition to providing military analysis, Leggiere draws extensively from Blücher's own writings to reveal the man behind the legend. Though tough as nails on the outside, Blücher was a loving family man who deplored the casualties of war. This meticulously written biography, enhanced by detailed maps and other illustrations, fills a large gap in our understanding of a complex man who, for all his flaws and eccentricities, is justly credited with releasing Europe from the yoke of Napoleon's tyranny.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I would give this book a qualified recommendation. Professor Leggiere has performed an admirable service by bringing to English readers considerable research done in Prussian/German archives and secondary sources. Often English language versions of the Napoleonic Wars focus on Wellington in Spain and Waterloo, or on Napoleon himself. Russians, Austrians, and especially the Prussians get short shrift, despite their considerable contributions to the ultimate downfall of the French Emperor. In fact, one could argue that Blücher's decision after the defeat at Ligny in June of 1815 to retreat north and west, towards Wellington but away from his own supplies and reinforcements, was the single most critical decision of that world changing campaign. Given that, and the Prussian contribution in 1814, it is high time well assembled studies of the Prussian be undertaken. Mr. Leggiere has done a yeoman's job. Unfortunately, the book is not for the uninitiated. The reader needs to know this material well for the book to provide real value. Mr. Leggiere does not provide context well. We are often thrown into campaigns with little understanding of their origins and goals. He offers very detailed descriptions of troop movements without sufficient accompanying maps, so the reader quickly becomes lost in the names of towns and rivers. An open atlas of Germany, France and Belgium is required at almost all times. Similarly, Leggiere fails to paint full portraits of the characters in this drama. The names of generals are introduced with little explanation, with the assumption perhaps that the reader already knows who they were and what role they played. Professor Leggiere also fails to paint a portrait of the broader world.

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